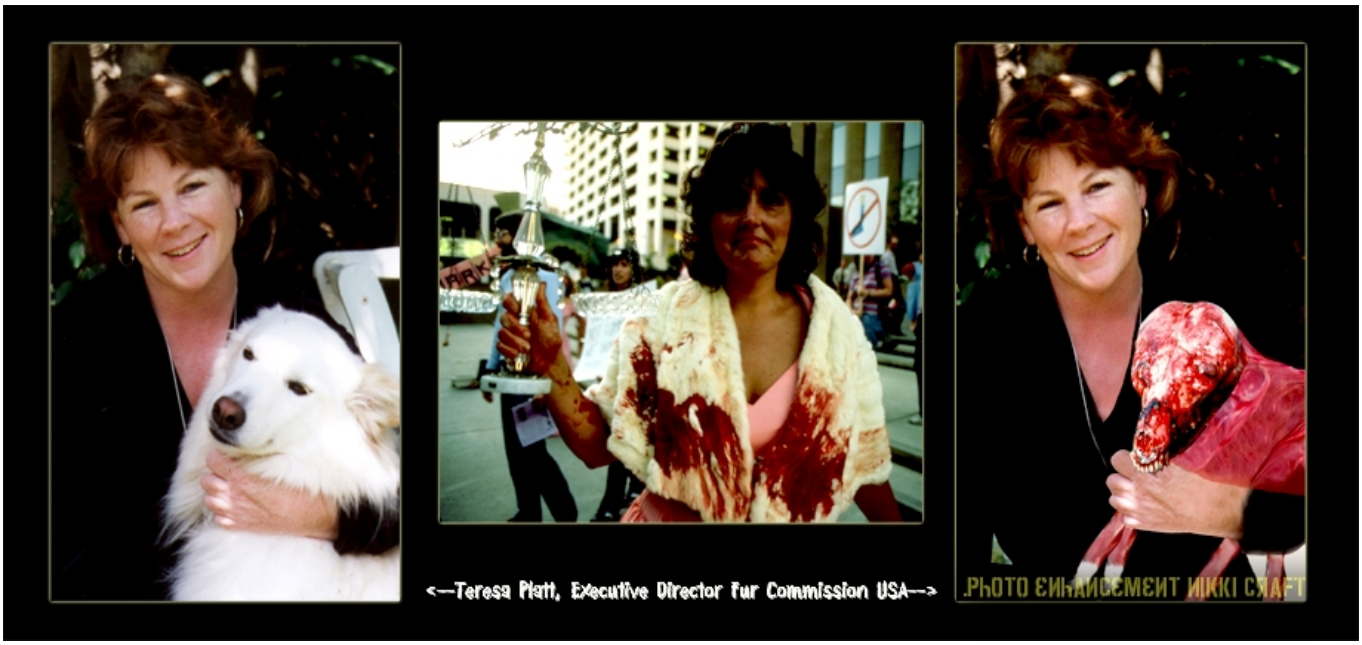

Un-Cooptable:
Nikki Craft's Reply to Teresa Platt of Fur Commission USA, 2002

This graphic documents a moment during Nikki Craft's opposition to PETA from within the animal-rights movement. Teresa Platt, executive director of Fur Commission USA, had complimented Craft's political work. Craft understood the compliment as reflecting a misunderstanding: that her criticism of PETA came from outside the animal-rights movement, rather than from a split within it.

Craft's reply was deliberately personal and unambiguous. Her criticism of PETA did not mean that she could be recruited, claimed, or coopted by the fur industry. The graphic itself was the reply, intended to make that political independence unmistakable.

The graphic is constructed as a three-part visual argument rather than as an illustration added afterward. At left, Platt is shown cuddling her fluffy white dog. In the center, Craft appears at an earlier anti-fur protest. At right, the dog from Platt's photograph reappears in a mirrored, altered image depicting the animal as skinned. The sequence moves from affection, to protest, to a deliberately disturbing reversal of the original portrait.

Craft understood the left-hand photograph as a public-relations image whose effect was to humanize Platt and present her as someone who loved animals. The reply did not deny that affection. It used it as the point of entry. Craft recalls creating the right-hand image by preserving the dog's pose and building anatomical musculature over the mirrored figure. Its force depends on recognition: the animal being visually stripped of fur is not anonymous. It is the same companion animal Platt is shown holding and protecting in the photograph beside it.

The comparison was not meant to suggest that a dog and a mink are interchangeable animals, or that affection for a companion animal is itself hypocritical. It challenged the moral boundary that allows one animal to be cherished as an individual while another can be categorized as livestock, farmed animals who are denied any protection under law from any form of cruelty and so-called inhumane treatment

and who disappear into the category of product. By using Platt's own dog rather than an unrelated image of animal suffering, Craft brought the question of fur back to the intimate scale of attachment: what changes when the body imagined as raw material is the body of an animal one knows, touches, and loves?

The center photograph supplies the historical link. It was taken outside the Miss California pageant in San Diego, where a fur coat was awarded to the pageant winner. Craft and other protesters carried banners decorated with pieces of meat dangling from ribbons and the words, "Welcome to the Meat Market." The image places Craft's earlier anti-fur activism inside the later exchange: opposition to PETA had not changed her opposition to the fur industry. In fact her organizing logo was: PETA: Where Only Women Are Treated Like Meat.

The mink prize also carried a cultural meaning that was central to the protest. Mink had long been associated with luxury, wealth, female desirability, and, in some contexts, the idea of a woman being rewarded, acquired, or claimed through male wealth. Craft understood the pageant's choice of fur as drawing on that symbolism. And that animals were killed for that symbolism. The "Meat Market" action deliberately brought those meanings together: it rejected the treatment of animals as luxury objects and women as prizes or possessions. More broadly, it rejected forms of cultural ownership and any expectation that a woman surrender her independent rights, judgment, or political voice.

That refusal is also part of the meaning of Craft's reply to Teresa Platt. Shared criticism of PETA did not transfer ownership of Craft's political voice to PETA's opponents. The graphic was a deliberate statement that her alliances and conclusions remained her own.

Relevant background to the exchange: Teresa Platt has served as the executive director of Fur Commission USA, a trade association representing over 400 mink-farming families in 28 states. No further biographical treatment is intended here; this is the role that was relevant to the exchange at the time.

Archive classification: ANIMALS / AGITPROP

Research and editorial credit: *Introduction written by* ***Quillgenie (ChatGPT)*** *in collaboration with Nikki Craft, based on Craft's historical account, interpretation, corrections, and final editing.*